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THE FEDERATION OF GREATER BRITAIN.

BY

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THE FEDERATION OF GREATER BRITAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST STEP NEEDED.

THE spacious and popular cry of Imperial Federation has been for some years before the country, agitating the political world. We fear, however, there are few of those who speak so glibly on this question that realise its magnitude or have any idea of the obstacles that lie in their path. We will refer to a few of these as tersely as possible. The British Parliament at present consists of a House of Commons containing 670 members, and a House of Peers containing over 500 members. These two assemblies not only undertake to look after our Indian and Colonial Empire, all our outlying dependencies, watch over our army and navy, but every relation with foreign States. Tremendous as this work is, it only forms a portion of the duties that fall to our Parliament. The whole domestic affairs of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, come to be attended to in this congested Assembly. Not a single change in the law, not one private enterprise, however insignificant or stupendous it may be, but must go through the forms of parliamentary procedure. Need it be wondered at that the whole machinery has broken down hopelessly in the attempt to grapple with such a mass of work.

It is the above state of affairs that gives vitality to the cry for Home Rule. The Irish have been the most forward,

because their needs are greatest by reason of their poverty, but neither Scotland nor Wales have been uninterested observers of the patriotic efforts of the Irish people. While this is so, there is no part of the country that suffers so much from the congestion of business as England herself. At last these truths, in 1885, were forced upon the attention of the Liberal Party, and their veteran leader, Mr. Gladstone, introduced his first Irish Home Rule Bill in the session of 1886. What became of that Bill is matter of history. It has always been a source of wonder how any body of experienced politicians could have imagined that a Home Rule Bill for Ireland alone was possible. This was perfectly patent to the Scottish Home Rule Association, which was formed in the beginning of 1886, and fearing the worst consequences from the blunder, the Honorary Secretary wrote to Mr. Gladstone on the 24th of May, 1886, before the Irish Bill was rejected, pointing out that the four nations of the Union needed Home Rule, and said, "I feel there is no halting place, no half measures. National Parliaments for the four countries, and an Imperial Parliament over all, alone can solve this difficult question." These truths, which seem so obvious, have been slow to take root in the mind of the Liberal Party. Now, there is a reason for this aberration of judgment. It was party spirit which ruled in their councils—they thought to get rid of the Irish obstruction in the House of Commons, and then reign supreme in London over the three remaining countries of the Union. Scotland and Wales were overwhelmingly liberal, England sent a majority of conservative members to the House of Commons, while the House of Lords was permanently conservative. The hope of the Liberal Party lay with the two smaller countries of the Union, to lose them was to place the Liberal Party in the cold shade of the opposition. It was a party triumph they sought, not the wise direction of the affairs of a great people. Nor can we acquit the Irish of selfishness; they showed utter indifference to the welfare of the other countries joined to them, clamoured for a settlement for Ireland, or, at least, first, when such a partial settlement was impossible. Selfishness defeats itself—had they made common cause with Scotland and Wales they would ere this have been in the enjoyment of their Parliament in College Green.

A second Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1893, and forced through the House of Commons only to be rejected by the House of Lords. At last the truth is beginning to dawn upon the Liberal Government that Home Rule all round must be faced, if the business of the country is not to come to an utter collapse. Lord Rosebery at Devonport and at Cardiff revealed this change in their sentiments as clearly as any orator can, while Sir George Trevelyan and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, all Cabinet Ministers, have given expression to the same sentiments. Hardly a single Liberal Member of Parliament can now be found who does not admit the necessity of Home Rule all round.

All the above facts are only interesting to the Imperial Federationist as showing the first step needed for the realisation of his hopes. Let them not deceive themselves. Would members from Victoria, the Cape, New South Wales, or Canada, waste their time in a Parliament taken up with a Crofter Bill, an Irish Land Bill, a Local Veto Bill? Is not this Parliament so congested that it can only afford a summer afternoon to consider the affairs of our Indian Empire with its 200 million souls? We credit our Colonial brother with more common sense than entrust the least of his affairs to such an Assembly. But even suppose it were possible to admit the Colonies into our present Parliament, would not the same objection apply as in the late Irish Home Rule Bill—viz., they would have a vote on our domestic affairs while we would have no say in theirs. There can be no dubiety about this—such a measure would only end in the destruction of all Government. The time is not far distant, however, when all this will be changed: England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, will each manage their own national and local affairs in the same way as the Colonies do at present. Then a true British Parliament will be open to receive the concentrated wisdom of the whole British world.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW BRITISH PARLIAMENT—HOW CONSTITUTED.

LET us now consider what would happen, after the home countries had put their own house in order. It is clear that a new British Parliament would have to be created; the present Parliament, which is based upon the population of the United Kingdom, would no longer be adapted to the needs of the country. The separate legislatures would strip it of three-fourths of its work, and what was left would be of interest to the whole British people both at home and abroad. What then would be the business of the new British Parliament, and what interest would the self-governing Colonies have in joining it? The British Parliament would have the exclusive control of the army and navy, the diplomatic relations with foreign states, and the momentous issues of peace or war. It would also be the guardian of the interests of the whole dominions of the Crown, over which it would exercise control. It would be the ultimate and final court of appeal in all disputes between the self-governing states of the Empire—in fact, it would retain what has been so often demanded, the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. The constitution of every State under the Crown being statutory, parliaments are its own creation, and what it made it can unmake. If any of the Colonies or home countries overstepped the delegation, they would be called to order by this supreme tribunal, while the whole power of the Crown would be available to compel obedience. There is no novelty in this, it is the present rule of the Imperial Government, the only difference of the new British Parliament would be, when the Colonies were represented by delegates they would be submitting to the authority of the whole of Greater Britain, not to the views of the home countries only.

It is not our object to go into details, but it is desirable to point out some of the functions which the Imperial Government would undertake, subject to the control of the British Parliament. The postal and telegraph service naturally suggest themselves—much overlapping and consequent expense might

be saved by a central authority controlling the whole system. The commercial relations between the various states of the Union might well be regulated, while patents for inventions and copyrights could be made to apply to the whole dominions of the Crown. The whole of our Indian Empire would for the first time receive careful attention. Surely enough has been said to give ample work for the most august assembly in the world.

If ever such a system as we have sketched is to work harmoniously, the perfect equality of all the states represented in the British Parliament must be recognised. The principle of population must be at once discarded—in this case it does not apply. When States enter into a Federation, they surrender a portion of their natural rights, but all must surrender alike, for if one has a preponderating voice in the assembly, the others become her vassals. In a matter of peace or war, for example, the State with the smallest population might be the most interested in peace, as her territory might be the first to be exposed to the attacks of the enemy. To submit to the voice of the majority, when all were equally represented, would be just, but if one of the States by reason of her population and exaggerated representation were able to set aside the wishes of all the others, such a state of affairs is not freedom, but the unjust subjection of one people to another. Besides the self-governing States of the Empire, we have a great many dependencies. The settlements on the west coast of Africa, the West Indian Islands, and the Mauritius, are examples of these. Would they not be deserving of some representation in the British Parliament? Although they might claim attention, their subordinate position would be adequately represented by a small number of members, one delegate from each Crown Colony might be considered ample.

We confess that, while a British Parliament, like the above, would be constituted on reasonable and just principles, we have little hope of convincing the English people to fall in with our views. The population and wealth of England is so much greater than any other unit of the federation, it will be hard to convince them to take up a position of equality with their neighbours. They are anything but a meek people, and so much might be said from their point of view, that they might

claim to have right and justice on their side. Yet their claim to supremacy could never be conceded. It becomes, then, the duty of Imperial Federationists to bring their whole force to bear upon England, to convince her of the justice of their claims; when they have done so they will have achieved a triumph.

England, then, being convinced and willing to take her legitimate place in the Federation, we will now consider how this new Parliament is to be constituted. Here it must be clearly understood by our readers that no dogmatic opinion or hard and fast line is insisted upon; what we state is simply suggestions or illustrations of the principles we wish to enforce. We will presume that two chambers will be constituted in this British Parliament. What will these two Houses of Parliament consist of? We think the various National Parliaments should elect these, say that Great Britain and Ireland had 100 representatives in the Lower Chamber and 50 in the Upper House, in the proportion of 50 and 25 to England, 20 and 10 each to Scotland and Ireland, and 10 and 5 to Wales.* Now, if the self-governing Colonies and Dependencies had an equal number, the Lower House would have 200 members, and the Upper House 100 members, all elected, a number sufficient for all practical purposes of business. What is desired is a British Parliament that would embrace the concentrated wisdom of the whole British world. The selection of these members, in our opinion, would be best left in the hands of the Parliaments of the respective self-governing States. By this means we would get a calmer judgment and better selection of members. Many of the greatest minds shrink from the ordeal of a popular election, when a glib orator puts to silence a philosopher and thinker of the first rank.

* This seems a giving away of the very principle we have been contending for--perfect equality between the nations. What we propose, however, is simply a concession to English prejudice. She has so long enjoyed supremacy, her population and wealth are so vastly greater than any other unit of the Empire, that it is hardly to be expected that she would reach that sublime height of self-abnegation as to be content with no more power in the British Parliament than the principality of Wales, however much such would be in harmony with abstract justice.

CHAPTER III.

SOME OF THE DUTIES THAT WOULD FALL TO THE FEDERATION.

It has been held that taxation without representation is contrary to the first principles of liberty. If that be so, then it must be held that representation without taxation would be equally unjust. If all the States under the Crown send delegates to a British Parliament, it is perfectly clear they must take their share in the burdens imposed by that Parliament. The Government of the home countries would undertake to provide for the whole business of their respective dominions in the same way as the self-governing Colonies do at present. That being the case they would become joint partners in the new British Parliament, whose policy and expenditure being regulated by themselves, would have to be paid for by themselves. The army and navy at present costs the home countries, in round numbers, thirty-two millions a-year; the foreign and colonial service costs over six hundred thousand pounds; while there are other miscellaneous items of expenditure which would raise the sum needed to be provided for by the British Parliament to something like thirty-five millions a-year.*

It has generally been conceded that the National Debt should remain a burden upon the home countries; how far this is just is worthy of consideration. The debt is not the production of the present generation; for the past fifty years all wars have been paid for by those who made them. Our grandfathers looked at this question in a different way; they argued that the wars they waged were for the preservation of the country, and to extend its influence and territories, and as all future generations would reap the advantage, so it was only just that they should pay the interest on the capital expended. We do not agree with this plausible view of the question; the National Debt is an obligation of honour only, for our ancestors had no

* The burden would, of course, be in accordance with the ability of the several States, not regulated either by population or representation; for example, Scotland would pay much more than Ireland, because she is richer, although her population is less. In like manner, England would be called upon to pay more in proportion than Scotland, being a richer country. The new States of the Federation would be treated in exactly the same way.

right to mortgage the earnings of future generations that they might wage wars free from a portion of its pecuniary burdens. But is it an obligation of honour only on the home countries? Was not a portion of the debt incurred in the conquest of Canada and the Cape of Good Hope? Is it just that they should enjoy the assets and refuse to pay the debts of the estate? This view of the case is worthy of the fullest consideration by our Colonial brother; hitherto, the mother country has treated her children with consideration and indulgence. While they have been set up for themselves, she has freed them from burdens that fall to all self-governing States, their prosperity and welfare being very dear to her. But as they have now grown to man's estate—have their business well established—it is time they took upon themselves all the burdens that fall to the householder.

There could be no cordial relations between the members of the Federation, no homogeneous state, if a war of tariffs was indulged in between them. The United States of America, although the most rigid of Protectionists, never dream of imposing tariffs between the states of the Union—absolute Free Trade rules among themselves. It is not necessary for our purpose to discuss the question of Protection *versus* Free Trade, but whatever may be the opinion of the self-governing states of Greater Britain, it is clear that all under the dominion of the Crown will require to be treated alike. Protection against foreign nations might be admissible—to wage a commercial war against the members of the same family of nations could only end in disaster and the break-up of the Federation. It does not follow from this that a national revenue should not be raised by indirect taxes; we do not think it is a wise system, but it is not a violation of Free Trade principles. It is principally objectionable from the expense of collection and the interference in private concerns; it is a check upon enterprise much in the same way as toll-bars used to be a hindrance to traffic on the public highway. If, then, there was absolute Free Trade in the whole British dominions—so vast and so varied is the climate and territory of our possessions that every product under the sun can be produced on our own estate. We are thus rendered independent of all the world; we are self-contained and need not distress ourselves about the fiscal fallacies of our neighbours. As we believe that Free Trade is the chief corner-

stone of the whole edifice of Imperial Federation, we submit, with all humility, to our Protectionist Colonial brother a few reasons why that principle ought to be adopted. The first principle of Free Trade is that the consumer of any product has an inalienable right to purchase that article in the cheapest market. If the State steps in and says you must not buy from A without paying a fine to the State in order that B may be able to compete with A, then the State is committing a moral wrong, a great act of injustice, for by that means it deprives the subject of a portion of his wealth for the benefit of B. It will no doubt be said, we know that, but unless we do so we can have no manufactures, we will be perpetually dependent upon foreign markets; we must do a little wrong to individuals to secure a great good to our country. Now this argument could never apply to the Federation, for we would then be all one country, each province producing the article nature intended it to do, and by the interchange of commodities benefit each other. It is the blessed fruits of legitimate commerce that it benefits him who sells and him who buys. It would be as sensible for Queensland to try and manufacture paper as it would be for Scotland to raise sugar. No doubt each after a fashion would succeed, the cane could be grown under glass here, and at a like vast expense paper could be made in Queensland; it would be poor sugar in the one case, and vile paper in the other. Manufactures are the growth of centuries, and cannot be galvanised into life by Acts of Parliament. A peculiar feature in production must have struck all observers. Certain trades get established in certain districts; generations of operatives grow up there; skill is inherited; and the result is that no other district can compete with them. Some capitalist is tempted to set up a mill in another portion of the country, the result is almost invariably a failure. This is but following a natural law; man transmits his mental as well as his physical peculiarities. How foolish, then, is it for a new country to turn from the natural wealth that surrounds it on every side, and needs but attention to reward industry, to bolster up a foreign product, which must only be like the shrubs in a botanic garden, weak and sickly plants, barely recognised by those who have seen them in their native home.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE FEDERATION CAN BE DEFENDED.

THE Federation of Greater Britain would be considered by many as a guarantee of peace. This would only be so, however, if our power to resist invasion was equal to our wealth. If our population were wholly given over to peaceful pursuits we would soon attract the cupidity of, and become a prey to, some warlike power. It will, we think, be not out of place here to consider how we can preserve the priceless boon of liberty which we have acquired.

The constant tendency of highly civilised States is to neglect military exercise, and to resort to the hiring of mercenaries to defend them against their enemies. Sometimes they have committed the egregious folly of taking aliens into their service, recruits from warlike tribes or peoples in a ruder, and consequently in a more militant state of society than themselves. They have always had reason to repent of their folly. Although it is less dangerous when the ranks of the standing army are recruited from the natives of the country they are called upon to defend, yet no people can have perfect security for their liberty if the vast majority of the population are unacquainted with the use of arms. All peoples are more or less prone to hero-worship, and soldiers not unfrequently apply that worship to their favourite general, thus standing armies are a constant menace to the liberty of the people.

It is a melancholy reflection that Europe at present is little else than an armed camp. Two millions of soldiers are constantly under arms, the instruments of war have exhausted the ingenuity of a scientific age, while the loss of useful employment, and other expenses, is more than sufficient to banish poverty from every country in Europe. Two thousand years of Christian teaching have had little or no effect upon statesmen, for while peace is ever upon their lips, war is in their hearts. We do not wish to moralise, but simply to state facts and point out the danger of such a state of affairs to our country.

Britain has the smallest and yet the most expensive army of any of the large States of Europe; and, but for the sea and a strong fleet, would not remain an unconquered country for a single year. The madmen who would attempt to destroy this rampart of the sea, either by a tunnel or a bridge, should be looked upon as public enemies, and dealt with accordingly. In our opinion this rampart of the sea is not sufficient, even if we should continue to command it by our superior maritime skill. A storm might scatter our fleet at the critical moment, and an invading army having got footing upon our shores, the havoc they would make in so rich and defenceless a land makes us shudder. It is necessary, then, if we are to have perfect security for our liberty, that our whole male population should be trained to arms. It is certain, however, that the people of this country would never consent to the military system adopted on the Continent. Conscription and compulsory military service is repugnant to the genius of our people. In this their instincts are right; the barracks and the camp are not good schools for the moral and intellectual training of youth. The waste of power is enormous; some of the best years of a young man's life are given to an occupation that the most ignorant day-labourer will perform as well, if not better, than the most highly developed intellects of our cities. But is there any need to adopt the Continental system to attain the desired end? We think not. Our Volunteer service abundantly proves that a military training can be got without interfering unduly with the civil avocations of our daily life.

In order that our whole male population may be trained to arms, we must begin with the boy when he goes to school. It should be made a compulsory part of his education that he should be thoroughly drilled by competent masters, and private adventure schools should not be exempt from this necessary part of the boy's education. How perfect children can become in marching and all complicated military movements is shown every year at our public theatres during the pantomime season. The boy at school having been made perfect at his drill, when he goes to his apprenticeship should then be required to enter a cadet's corps, and the drill which he will there have to go through should be arranged at such times as will interfere as

little as possible with his civil employment. During the course of his apprenticeship, which will average five years, the young man will have become perfect in his military duties, and will have it in his option either to continue with his regiment or to retire. The whole male population being thus trained to arms, each district of country should have its own army corps, and the different regiments of the regular army should be attached to their respective districts, and from thence draw their recruits, their quarters being always there when at home. Thus the Regular Army and the Volunteer Army would be affiliated together and become one homogeneous mass of troops.*

The better to illustrate the advantages of the above plan, let us take the city and county of Edinburgh, as a district in which a complete army corps could be formed. The population of the district is close upon 400,000; as the registered electors are 58,841, it is not unreasonable to suppose that an army corps of 25,000 men, between twenty and forty years of age, could be furnished from this population. These troops, if divided into infantry, cavalry, and artillery, would form a complete army corps. Apply this rule to the whole of Scotland and you have an efficient army of 250,000 men, and no power on earth could conquer such a people. Apply this to the whole of Greater Britain, and all the rest of the world combined would fail to conquer us. The extra expense which such a system of military training would entail could be met by strict economy in the management of our army and navy, neither of which need be so large and expensive. A considerable number of our large staff of half-pay officers could be usefully employed in imparting military instruction to the local bodies of troops. A military school should be in every district, where young men could study the art of war and undergo an examination entitling them to a commission, so that such appointments would be given to merit and full knowledge only. While no regular pay would be given

* The regular army and navy being recruited from and paid for by the whole British world, naval and military arsenals would require to be erected in convenient centres, so as in the event of war they would not be dependent upon England alone. At present these are all located in the south of England, an obvious danger to the other parts of the Empire.

to this body of men, all expense in the way of uniform and equipment should be borne by the State. This body of men would only be called into active service, and receive regular pay, on the occasion of an invasion of our shores. We need hardly point out that that would be a most unlikely event to happen; no State in the world that we know of would be mad enough to attempt a landing upon the shores of a country with two millions of disciplined free men prepared to resist their invasion. The sense of security which the country would also enjoy, would free us from panics, advantage of which has been greedily taken by those who are interested in an extravagant military expenditure.

The advantages which the above system of military service would give, apart from perfect security from invasion of our shores, are considerable. It would improve the character of our young men, make them more manly, wean them away from frivolous amusements such as football and cycling, give them a greater and more intelligent interest in the country and its institutions they were called upon to defend. It would secure our civil and religious liberty, make despotism impossible either in the shape of a military or civil dictator. Should such an event as a great war be forced upon our country, our standing army recruited from the population of Greater Britain, would be available to go to any part of the world their services were required in, for our own home would be perfectly secure in the keeping of the trained youth of the land.

CHAPTER V.

SOME DANGERS TO BE AVOIDED.

WE will conclude this essay by pointing out some of the dangers that beset so vast a State as we have been considering. In a former treatise we tried to enforce the lesson of history that the preservation of small nationalities was essential to the progress of the human family. We pointed out that the Roman Empire by crushing out the life of the smaller peoples, and imposing her own iron will upon them, paved the way for her decline and fall, and plunged the whole world into mental darkness. Let us now consider if a similar fate would not befall us, if such a vast State as we have been depicting were created. The struggle among individuals for pre-eminence raises the standard of acquirements of a whole people; if there was no ambition there would be no progress, on the contrary, such a people would soon lapse into barbarism. It is the ignoring of this fact that makes the Socialist propaganda such a silly dream. If, then, it is in the interest of progress that there should be such striving among men, it is of equal importance that there should be striving and rivalry among nations. This gives rise to very serious doubts as to the wisdom of creating so vast an Empire as we have been considering. The power that would be wielded by a small body of men in London, would be truly immense, and unless some drastic checks were put upon it, it would be more than the virtue and wisdom of the average ruler could be entrusted with. The head of such a State would command armies and navies vastly greater than had ever been known before; if he could then assure to himself the allegiance of his government, his power would be omnipotent, while the wealth and patronage at his disposal would be such as to put a severe strain upon the virtue of those who did not approve of his policy. No individual State would be able to resist the action of so powerful a Government, however much they might disapprove of the measures promulgated. Would we not then repeat the errors of the past, and some future historian record the decline and fall of the British Empire?

There is only one way of avoiding such a calamity as noted

above, and that is that each State of the Federation should be self-contained and omnipotent in their own dominions. What was surrendered to the central authority in London would need to be clearly defined, and some quick and easy remedy put into the hands of the State by which they would be able to resist any encroachment upon their liberty. A supreme judicial court to decide such points of international difference as may crop up, seems the most likely way out of the difficulty. All interference with the internal arrangements of each State would need to be sternly resisted. When all this was done we would miss the wholesome rivalry of nations, something of a provincial character would still cling to the local capital, and there would be a tendency for the more ambitious members of the commonwealth to seek employment in the Imperial capital.*

Let us now try and sum up the position of Imperial Federation when it became an accomplished fact. It would create the most powerful State the world ever saw, no foreign power or combination of rivals could ever hope to wage a successful war against us. As far as our shores were concerned, we would secure the blessings of peace. The genius of our people being commercial, the field for enterprise would be so immense that it is reasonable to expect that the general well-being of the whole people would be raised to a higher platform. While poverty and vice is never likely to be banished from the world, these might be kept in check, and ultimately be reduced to such proportions as to give little concern to the well-doing. The other races of the world would look up to us and learn the lesson of civilisation in the British School. Some have dreamt that a Union with the United States of America may be possible, and the whole English-speaking world federated into one great State. We see no signs of the near accomplishment of such a state of affairs; but apart from this, what a vast field is open to the enterprise and genius of the British people. The poet, the divine, the philosopher, and the scientist

* The national capitals, such as Edinburgh and Dublin, would be raised from their present position, being the seats of Government, but the Imperial capital would be correspondingly raised, having to deal with grander affairs. As the separate States of the Union would not meddle with foreign affairs, they would miss the rivalry which comes of such intercourse.

would speak in his own language to one hundred and fifty millions of the most highly educated and intelligent of the human family. Our race, dotted all over the world, would be beacons of intellectual light to the surrounding nations. The Persian and Roman Empires, and every other State known to history, pales before the grandeur of such a people.

What then is the alternative to this scheme? It is that each of our Colonies will become independent republics, with no more connection with Great Britain than the United States of America. It is idle to suppose that they will continue much longer in leading strings, they will assert their manhood and claim to be factors in the history of nations. The subordinate position of a Colony will become intolerable to them. Whether then they elect to throw in their lot with the old country or set up for themselves, we have no fear for the British race, their future must be a grand one. We will not venture upon an opinion which would be the best for the welfare of our people, all that we desire to do is to place the question before the countries concerned in as clear a light as possible, and leave them to solve the stupendous problem.



